

**PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS  
OPERATION G.R.I.P. ANTI-GANG STATEWIDE STRATEGY  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**



**I. INTRODUCTION**

In response to increasing gang<sup>1</sup> violence throughout the country, the United States Department of Justice recently directed all U.S. Attorneys to establish anti-gang task forces, called Operation G.R.I.P. (Gang Resistance Through Investigation and Prosecution) in their respective districts. The goal of this effort is to bring together federal, state, and local law enforcement and corrections agencies, with other governmental and private sector entities that deal with our youth, to develop and implement strategies to deter gang membership and prevent gang crime and violence.

The U.S. Attorneys were also directed to convene a “Gang Summit” in their respective districts to discuss the extent of gang problems and to begin the discussion about how best to counter gang activity.

In the District of New Hampshire, the U.S. Attorney established our local Operation G.R.I.P. and joined with the New Hampshire Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Task Force, which had begun in May of 2002. The PSN Task Force consists of federal, state, county, and local law enforcement and corrections agencies united together to combat gun crime and violence by targeting violent criminals for aggressive prosecution in state or federal court, and by encouraging the prevention of gun crime through community outreach and awareness efforts. Because of the close tie between gun crime and violence and gang crime and violence, it made sense to combine the Operation G.R.I.P. program with the pre-existing PSN Task Force. The combined Task Force meets bi-monthly at the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Concord.

New Hampshire held its Gang Summit on October 5, 2006 at the Wayfarer Hotel in Bedford. The event was co-sponsored and funded by the U.S. Attorney’s Office and the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, through its Division of Juvenile Justice Services. The introductory video to the summit can be viewed on-line at the U.S. Attorney’s Office web-site: [www.usdoj.gov/usao.nh](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao.nh). Over 300 law enforcement officials, educators, and social service providers heard presentations from local and national experts on the problems of gang crime and successful prevention strategies.

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<sup>1</sup>The Department of Justice definition of a gang is defined as follows: a group or association of three or more persons who may have a common identifying sign, symbol, or name and who individually or collectively engage in, or have engaged in, criminal activity which creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

Acting under the leadership of Attorney General Kelly Ayotte and U.S. Attorney Tom Colantuono, the PSN/Operation G.R.I.P. Task Force has developed this Statewide Strategy to combat and deter the growth of gangs and gang-related crime and violence. The Strategy has two parts. The first part addresses general actions that can be taken on a statewide basis. But since the Task Force recognizes that gang problems are most often manifested at the local level, they need to be dealt with locally. Therefore, the second part of the Strategy provides a suggested template, or outline, for how local communities can establish their own anti-gang partnerships. This is only a guide to assist communities. Each community will know best how to structure its own group if the community leaders decide that they have a gang problem that needs to be addressed. The PSN Operation G.R.I.P. Task Force, representing key federal, state, county, and local agencies involved in the fight against gang crime and violence, stands ready to assist local communities in this important work in any way we can.

## II. MISSION STATEMENT

The Task Force recognizes that New Hampshire, while being a relatively safe state in which to live, is not immune to national trends. We have seen a steady increase in gang-related activity in our cities and towns, especially in the southern tier. Our Y.D.C. houses many juvenile offenders who identify themselves as members of gangs, and our adult correction facilities also house prisoners with gang affiliations. In addition to criminal street gangs, New Hampshire has for many years been home to members of the Outlaw Motorcycle gangs.

The mission of the New Hampshire PSN/Operation G.R.I.P. is to protect the law abiding citizens of the state and to keep our communities safe and free from crime by stopping the recent growth of criminal gangs and gang-related criminal activity in our state.

To accomplish this result, the PSN/Operation G.R.I.P. Task Force needs the support of our elected and appointed state leadership. We also need the cooperation of all communities where gang crime is a problem. Gang members are highly mobile, and they will go wherever they believe that they can succeed. We need to provide a united front so that there are no safe havens where they can operate with impunity. We need a full partnership between federal, state, county, and local law enforcement and correction agencies, as well as support from statewide leaders in the business community, education field, non-profit agencies, and the faith based community.

New Hampshire has a well-deserved reputation as one of the best places in the country in which to live, work, and raise a family. The proliferation of criminal gangs, if left unchecked, would greatly diminish our standing, deter growth, discourage in-migration, destroy our neighborhoods, harm tourism, and generally have many other negative effects. It is in the best interest of the entire state to have a strong and clear message that gang crime and violence will not be tolerated in New Hampshire, and that the entire state will band together and will work tirelessly and consistently to combat and eradicate it.

### III. STATEWIDE STRATEGY

In order to meet the mission stated above, the PSN/Operation G.R.I.P. Task Force adopts the following Statewide Anti-Gang Strategy for New Hampshire.

1. The law enforcement community will seek the support of the elected and appointed political leadership of the state in its anti-gang efforts.
2. The law enforcement community should work together with the Police Standards and Training Council and gang investigator associations to promote additional training for police officers and probation and parole officers about gangs.
3. Law enforcement agencies should be encouraged to join NESPIN (New England State Police Information Network) so that they can input and access gang-related intelligence through RISSGANG. They should also share information through the FBI's VGTOF (Violent Gang and Terrorist Organization File) and the Department of Justice's National Gang Intelligence Center and the new national multi-agency, anti-gang task force called Gang-TECC (Gang Targeting, Enforcement, and Coordination Center).
4. Federal law enforcement agencies working in New Hampshire, under the leadership of the U.S. Attorney, shall make their membership in the Task Force and their anti-gang efforts a priority. These agencies include:
  - a) The FBI, through its Bedford-based Safe Streets Task Force, in combating all forms of illegal gang activity;
  - b) The BATF in its efforts to combat illegal gun possession, use, and trafficking by gang members;
  - c) The DEA, in its targeting of illegal drug distribution by gang members;
  - d) ICE, in its targeting of gang activity by illegal aliens and by multi-national criminal organizations;
  - e) The U.S. Marshals Service, through its focus on gang fugitives through its Joint Fugitive Task Force;
  - f) The U.S. Attorney's Office will cooperate with all member agencies of the Task Force in prosecuting all worthy cases of violations of federal criminal laws by gang members, including RICO prosecutions where appropriate.
6. State law enforcement agencies, including the New Hampshire State Police, the Department of Corrections, Division of Probation and Parole, the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Juvenile Justice Services, and the Enforcement Bureau of the State Liquor Commission, as well as all local police departments and Sheriffs offices, should maintain a focus and a priority on investigating and prosecuting gang activity which violates state law.

7. The New Hampshire Attorney General's Office and the ten County Attorney's Offices should work with the above agencies to prosecute aggressively all violations of state law by gang members.
8. The New Hampshire State Prison system, the YDC, and the County Houses of Corrections should collect and share information about gang member inmates, should monitor gang-related activity within their institutions, and should maintain a zero tolerance policy against gang activity, with strict disciplinary procedures.
9. The newly created New Hampshire State Police Intelligence Fusion Center should serve as a clearinghouse for all statewide information about gang members and gang activity in the state, and it should link with other fusion centers in the region.
10. The state Department of Transportation will adopt an active graffiti removal program for all bridges and other infrastructure along state highways under its jurisdiction.
11. All law enforcement agencies should partner with their County Sheriffs and the U.S. Marshals Service in targeting fugitive gang members for apprehension.
12. The U.S. Attorney-led Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force should target drug distribution organizations run by criminal gangs where appropriate.
13. The DEA-led HIDTA Task Force based in Hillsborough County should make a priority of targeting drug dealing by criminal gangs in its area of operation.
14. Task Force members should promote legislation that can assist state and local agencies in fighting gang activities. Suggested areas of possible legislation could include enhanced penalties for certain types of gang crime, stricter laws against graffiti and other types of criminal mischief, and tightening the pistol permit laws.
15. The Task Force should encourage statewide business groups and charitable foundations to assist local anti-gang partnerships through financial assistance to non-profit agencies and faith-based organizations which are helping with anti-gang efforts, as well as to job-training and placement programs.
16. The State Department of Education and Board of Education should adopt policies and procedures to encourage local school boards and school districts to cooperate with law enforcement and community-anti-gang partnerships.
17. The Task Force should promote public awareness and education about its anti-gang message and efforts with the assistance of statewide media outlets, speeches,

public appearances, news interviews, and other similar means.

#### IV. SUGGESTED TEMPLATE FOR LOCAL ANTI-GANG PARTNERSHIPS

The New Hampshire PSN/Operation G.R.I.P. Task Force Task Force encourages all communities with a perceived or growing gang problem to start an anti-gang community partnership. We recommend that local anti-gang partnerships consider the following suggestions.

1. Support from Local Political Leadership  
In order to be successful, the effort should be fully supported by the Mayor or Board of Selectmen in the community. The open, active, and public support of the elected leadership of the community will greatly assist the Police Department, the School Department, and other public agencies within the community to dedicate the time, attention, resources, and personnel to get the job done.
2. Broad-Based Community Partnership  
In order to engage the entire community in the effort, many public and private sector entities, as well as civic leaders and prominent volunteer citizens, should be included in the partnership. These would include law enforcement, educators, parent groups, the business community, service clubs, non-profit agencies (especially those which deal directly with youth), churches and faith-based organizations, local judges, landlord groups, youth sports organizations, neighborhood watch groups, and local media outlets.
3. Law Enforcement Leadership  
Because the type of gang activity that has the greatest impact on the community is criminal activity, the Police Department should take a leadership role in the partnership, and the Police Chief or some other high-ranking officer should play an active role in leading the partnership. The Police Department should also engage in pro-active, anti-gang police work which should include:
  - a) Designating specially trained officers to work in anti-gang squads;
  - b) Maintaining and constantly updating information about gang members and gang activity within the community;
  - c) Sharing information with school resource officers and with school officials about gang activity in and around schools;
  - d) Sharing information with neighboring police departments about gang activity in the region;
  - e) Utilizing the intelligence resources listed in paragraph III;
  - f) Encouraging officers to receive specialized training through membership in gang investigator associations;
  - g) Entering into partnerships with appropriate federal agencies and their task forces (such as the FBI's Safe Streets Task Force or DEA's HIDTA) when investigating specific gang criminal behavior which may violate federal laws, such as drug dealing, gun trafficking, extortion, certain robberies, or gang crime committed by fugitives or illegal aliens;

- h) Promoting a zero tolerance policy for gang graffiti, and working with prosecutors and the courts to prosecute aggressively “taggers”, while working with the public works department on graffiti removal programs;
- I) Partnering with juvenile and adult probation and parole officers to enforce intensive supervision of gang members and help enforce a zero tolerance policy on probation and parole violations by gang members;
- j) Partnering with the PSN/Operation G.R.I.P. Task Force and ATF to target gang members who have violated federal firearms laws for aggressive prosecution in federal court;
- k) Strategically targeting the leaders of local gangs for prosecution in order to weaken the structure of the gang and diminish its influence;
- l) Partnering with investigators from the State Liquor Commission Bureau of Enforcement to strictly enforce all applicable laws and regulations at nightclubs and liquor establishments that cater to gang members;
- m) Working with DEA, the Attorney General’s Drug Task Force, OCDETF, and the HIDTA Task Force in priority targeting of drug dealing by gang members;
- n) Partnering with the U.S. Marshals Joint Fugitive Task Force to target all gang members who are fugitives from justice;
- o) Partnering with schools, social service agencies, Police Athletic Leagues, and other youth sports organizations and clubs to work with at-risk youths to help deter them from joining gangs;
- p) Working with neighborhood watch groups to strengthen relationships and information-sharing in neighborhoods where gang activity may be occurring;
- q) Working with other partners and the local media to promote citizen awareness and education about the community’s efforts to combat its gang problem.

4. Strong Support from School Departments

Since so many gang members join gangs when they still are attending school, the public schools have to be key players in any effective anti-gang partnership. Under the leadership of the elected members of the School Board and the local superintendent, all personnel of the school district, and parent/teacher organizations, need to assist the community in combating gang membership and activity in the following ways:

- a) Utilizing school resource officers to share information about school based gang activity, or sharing directly to the police department in communities without school resource officers;
- b) Adopting and strictly enforcing dress codes designed to deter the wearing of gang colors;
- c) Promptly and aggressively dealing with and reporting to the police all gang-related bullying or assaults during school hours or on school property, especially if there are indications of after-school reprisals;
- d) Encouraging school counselors to assist students who want to resist pressure to join gangs or who want to leave gangs;
- e) Enforcing a zero tolerance policy on gang graffiti, and reporting all cases to the police for prosecution, and removing all gang graffiti found on school property;
- f) Strictly enforcing all laws and policies concerning the possession of dangerous weapons or illegal drugs in the school building or on school property;
- g) Cooperating with the police department whenever the need arises to do anti-drug sweeps of the schools;
- h) Actively promoting the concept throughout the school year that the schools are “gang-free” zones and that gang activity in the schools will not be tolerated;

5. Community Support

The anti-gang partnership cannot succeed without the support of key civic leaders, the business community, non-profit groups, clergy and faith-based groups, civic and fraternal clubs, scouts, athletic leagues, and other youth-oriented groups, and neighborhood groups. Gangs thrive when they have intimidated average citizens into inaction and have taken over control of neighborhoods as their territory. Police Departments acting alone cannot stop this. It will take the concerted efforts of the entire community to prevent this pattern of neighborhood deterioration.

The business community has a vested interest in promoting a safe, crime-free community. The local partnership should solicit financial assistance from the business community in order to support the important work of deterring gang membership by providing alternative activities and better choices for the youth of the community.

6. Deterrence and Prevention Strategies

Gang prevention is challenging and difficult work, but it is very rewarding for the community because each young person who is kept out of a gang is one fewer “client” who has to be dealt with by the criminal justice and corrections system. For more information on successful strategies on gang prevention, please see the attached article by Dr. Phelan Wyrich.

The non-law enforcement partners must focus their efforts on deterring gang membership through the strategies discussed in this article. Local agencies should partner with the schools to provide alternative activities for teens, especially during the vulnerable 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. time period after students leave school but before their parents, guardians, or custodians return from work. Non-profit clubs, agencies, and organizations which deal with youth are on the front line of the effort to deter gang membership. Clergy and faith-based groups that deal directly with at-risk families and who know their needs can also play a key role in keeping teens out of gangs.

School and community counselors must work with youth to encourage them to stay off drugs and to resist the peer pressure to join gangs. Peer-to-peer mentoring is a “best practice” that has worked well in the City of Dover. Social service clubs and agencies also need to fill the void on weekends by providing alternate activities, especially on Friday and Saturday nights. Finally, the business community should partner with job-placement agencies and vocational training programs to provide employment opportunities for potential gang members to steer them away from gang activities and into productive pursuits.

7. Community Education and Awareness

In order to be successful, the local anti-gang partnership needs to publicize its efforts to gain broad community support. It will need the assistance of local media outlets to cover its meetings, publicize its strategy, and explain to the public what it is doing and why. Ideally, the partnership will gain editorial support from local media outlets for its efforts. The general public needs to be made aware of what is being done to make their community safer, and what they can do to help.



## **New Hampshire's Anti-Gang Strategy: Prevention Resources.**

There are a number of resources available for the development of community based anti-gang intervention strategies. These include, but are not limited to:

- The National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) – The NYGC has developed a manual on assessing community gang problems, and has been supporting practitioners, researchers, and policy makers with publications, training, and assistance on youth gangs. See: <http://www.iir.com/nygc>
- The federal government has worked to identify more than 180 programs that address a wide range of the risk factors associated with “youth at risk” – particularly boys - as part of the President’s “Helping America’s Youth” initiative. A searchable database on successful programs may be found at the *Community Guide to Helping America’s Youth* at: <http://helpingamericasyouth.gov/>
- The National Criminal Justice Reference Service in the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, offers a great amount of information on youth, gang violence, and community based intervention strategies, along with sources of funding, and may be found at: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/spotlight/gangs/Summary.html>
- The ability to assess and evaluate anti-gang strategies is critical to success. The Juvenile Justice and Evaluation Center is a resource to consider when evaluating gang prevention/intervention programs. See: <http://www.jrsa.org/jjec/programs/gang/evaldes.html>
- The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center provides current information developed by Federal agencies or with Federal support on youth violence and is a user-friendly, single point of access to Federal information on youth violence, and may be found at: <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/about/index.asp>
- Sources for funding information across federal agencies, include: the catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA), available at [www.cfda.gov/](http://www.cfda.gov/) and Grants.gov at [www.grants.gov/](http://www.grants.gov/)